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AUTHOR Ryu, Jung S.
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ABSTRACT

A study was conducted to determine the relationships between three variables related to the assimilation process of immigrants to the United States-familiarity with English, degree of identification with the new culture, and degree of attachment to the homeland--and three variables related to media needs--the need for information, the need to become integrated into the new culture, and the need for achieving proficiency in English. The subjects, 109 Korean immigrants (62 males and 47 females) living in the Los Angeles area, completed a nine-page, self-administered questionnaire that assessed their English proficiency, assimilative attitudes, degree of attachment to Korea, and media-related needs. Among the findings were the following: the lower the English proficiency, the greater is an immigrant's need to learn English through the mass media, especially television; as the degree of assimilation increases, there is an increased need for information through mass media, especially among male respondents; and as the degree of assimilation increases, an immigrant's use of television to satisfy the need for integration increases, especially among female respondents. (GW)

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MASS MEDIA'S ROLE IN THE ASSIMILATION PROCESS: A STUDY OF KOREAN IMMIGRANTS IN THE LOS ANGELES AREA

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Jurg S. Ryu

Miami University

Department of Communication and Theatre

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MASS MEDIA'S ROLE IN THE ASSIMILATION PROCESS: A STUDY OF KOREAN IMMIGRANTS IN THE LOS ANGELES AREA

Introduction

Every year close to 400,000 immigrants are admitted into the United States of America. In the 1970's, immigrants contributed 21 percent of the U. S. population growth -- more than one in every five new Americans. Changes in immigration policy embodied in the 1965 Immigration Act increased the number of Asian immigrants in the United States to more than five times the number of immigrants in 1965. In 1965 Asians constituted only 7 percent of the immigrant population; by 1975, the Asian proportion increased to 34.3 percent. In 1975 approximately 130,000 Vietnamese refugees were admitted into the United States. When the Vietnamese population begins to appear in official immigration figures in the years ahead, Asians will comprise an even larger proportion of new Americans.

Immigrants arriving in a new country must adjust themselves to a different society. This is an assimilation experience for them -- a resocialization called neo-socialization. In order for immigrants to survive, they must learn the language which is particular to the different society, and they must be employed in a vocation which will provide a regular income. They must learn the social norms of the different culture if they are to adjust to the society and participate in its social

activities. Prejudice toward different ethnic groups still exists in this society. Bogardus (1959), which is still relevant (cf. Vander Zanden, 1966), reports, with the results of studies from 1926, 1946, and 1956, that the racial distance quotient of 40 racial and ethnic groups is consistent among Americans. Near the top of the preference-ranking scale are northern Europeans, then generally southern and eastern Europeans, and near the bottom are Orientals and Negroes. To avoid the ill-adjustment or emotional failure, many immigrants tend to form their own community in their adopted country. In this "foreign colony" immigrants speak their own tongue; they behave according to their own norms, and they live in their own culture.

Given the above, it becomes important to study how immigrants adjust themselves to the new society. It is of intellectual interest and social concern.

How the immigrants are "socialized" is a myth. Immigrants are not provided with formal education or orientation by the U. S. government. The belief that assimilation is an inevitable and automatic process still prevails. Berry (1951, p 372) notes that "the various ethnic minorities would of their own accord adopt the dominant English pattern of living even if left to their own devices."

In modern society, the mass media share the role of socialization traditionally carried out by people. This leads to the basic assumption of this study that the mass media, particularly television, function as the primary neo-socialization agent for immigrants who have not established close relationships with Americans and those who have not received their education in the United States. It is likely that the mass media would be

the only "culture" immigrants could contact when isolated in a "foreign colony."

Recent studies of audience gratifications served by the mass media present a potentially useful basis for analyzing immigrants' media behavior. Gratification studies argue that the media audience is purposeful in its media selection and that the patterns of media use are influenced by audience expectations of mass media content. The audience looks to the media for the gratification of needs (cf. Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch, 1974).

It is a widely accepted theory that the social communication or mass media in general perform three basic functions in a society -- surveillance, correlation, and socialization (cf. Lasswell, 1948; Schramm, 1957; Wright, 1959). Based on this theory, this study tries to see how these functions are carried out among an immigrant group who has considerably different cultural background from American. In what ways do the mass media effect an immigrant in the assimilation process? Do the mass media have the same functions among immigrants? What influences immigrant's media behavior? To answer these questions, six variables were selected from among many relevant variables: three variables related to the assimilation process and three variables related to media needs.

A. Variables related to the assimilation process

(1) Familiarity with English: The degree of an immigrant's ability to carry out on verbal communication with host people, Americans.

(2) The degree of assimilative attitudes: A relative predisposition toward the development of a new group identification and the adoption of the new group culture. Here, identification is defined as awareness of self as member of a new group.

(3) The degree of native attachment: An immigrant's desire to spend his or her life in the homeland.

B. Media related needs

(1) Surveillance needs: Surveillance refers to "the collection and distribution of information concerning events in the environment, both outside and within any particular society" (Wright, 1959, p 16).

(2) Integration needs: Desires to understand American people; to know how the world thinks about America; and to get the feeling of involvement in the new society.

(3) Need for learning English: An immigrant's desire to achieve English competency in daily life.

Korean immigrants are the special concern of this study for three reasons: (1) English is not their mother tongue; (2) they are the most rapidly growing group of immigrants in the 1970's -- over 28,000 Korean immigrants arrived in 1975 (U. S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, 1976); and (3) they tend to form their own communities.

Hypotheses

To find the relationships among three variables related to the assimilation process and three variables related to media needs, the following six hypotheses are formulated.

1. The lower the English proficiency, the greater an immigrant's need to learn English by mass media, especially television.

Need of learning English can be satisfied by three possible agents: Americans (either instructor or friends who volunteers to teach English), compatriots from the same country, and the mass media. Although personal

agents who teach immigrants English are desirable, there are, in most cases, not enough of them for immigrants. The mass media are readily available. In addition, there are psychological factors that explain immigrants' media behavior. Wiebe (1969/70) suggests that there are two psychological factors behind the media audience behavior: reluctance to cope with other people, and resistance to socialization. Since television is the medium that synchronizes audio-visual effects with entertainment most of the time, immigrants will consume television rather than print media when there is a choice.

2. As English proficiency increases, an immigrant's use of the mass media to satisfy the need for surveillance increases.

3. As the degree of assimilative attitudes increases, an immigrant's use of the mass media to satisfy the need for surveillance increases.

Wright (1975, pp 11-16) lists four surveillance functions of the mass media working for individuals. First, information about events occurring within the society and in the world provides warnings about imminent threats and dangers. Second, a flow of data about the environment is instrumental in meeting the everyday needs in the society. Third, mass-communicated news confers prestige upon individuals who "make the effort to keep themselves informed about events." Fourth, news reports about individuals often enhance their prestige.

The individuals considered in Wright's paradigm should be <u>normal</u> citizens of a society (or country). If some individuals do not understand the language of the society or deviate from the norms of the society, the functions of surveillance of the mass media would stop working among those individuals. Among immigrants, therefore, the surveillance functions are closely associated with such variables as English proficiency and the

degree of assimilative attitudes. The surveillance functions of the mass media will increase when an immigrant can and would like to merge in the new society.

4. As the degree of assimilative attitudes increases, an immigrant's use of the mass media to satisfy the need for integration increases.

5. As the degree of native attachment increases, an immigrant's use of the mass media to satisfy the need for integration decreases.

The assimilation process requires a stranger to understand the people of the new society and/or to have a feeling of involvement in some important events of the society. As the degree of assimilation increases, an immigrant's desire to become a member of the host society is thought to increase because of perceived advantages and privileges of host members. If, however, the degree of native attachment increases, the desire to become a member of the host society will decrease.

6. The greater the degree of native attachment of an immigrant, the lower the need to learn English by mass media.

When an immigrant is reluctant to contact Americans for one reason or another, the need to learn English will remain at a minimum level. Thus, there will be a negative relationship between the degree of native attachment of an immigrant and the need to learn English by mass media.

Methodology

The population of this particular study includes Korean immigrants 18 years of age or over who lived in the Los Angeles area. About 50,000 Korean adults were estimated to live in the area in 1976. Half of this population lived in Korean towns in Los Angeles downtown, which we will

call temporarily Area A and Area B. It is assumed that about 30 to 40 percent of the total population lived in Area A; and that about 15 to 20 percent of the population lived in Area B. The rest of the population was scattered in and around the City of Los Angeles. Since there was no directory that listed all names of the population in this area, block sampling methods were used in selecting subjects. Four blocks were designated: (1) Area A, (2) Area B, (3) other area in Los Angeles, and (4) adjacent cities -- Hawthorne and Lawndale. Based on the assumed population described above, sample sizes in each block were allocated as follows: 40 in Area A, 20 in Area B, 30 in other areas in Los Angeles, and 30 in adjacent cities. The final sample of this study was composed of 109 Korean immigrants -- 62 males and 47 females.

A nine-page, self-administered questionnaire was formulated to gather the data pertinent to the hypotheses. Four mass media are included in this study: the two most available print media, newspapers and magazines; and the two most popular non-print media, radio and television.

Media related needs were selected from three functions of the mass media: socialization, surveillance, and integration (or interpretation and prescription). The following eight need statements were used in the questionnaire.

To learn the English language better

To understand what people living in America are like

To know how the political system works in America

To obtain information about daily life

To obtain information about social activities

To get the feeling that I'm involved in important events

To keep up with the way the government is doing its job

To know how the world thinks about America

The respondents were asked to respond to a five point scale, ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree, provided for each need statement as it applied to each of the four media.

The English proficiency test consisted of 10 sentences selected from 20 sentences in the pretest. Included elements in the test were an immigrant's recognition of basic English grammar, idiomatic expressions, slang, and vocabulary. Typical statements included in the test were as follows:

> I wish I were rich. Pull yourself together, Paul. He ripped that coat off from a department store.

Each respondent was asked to indicate "Yes" the sentence is correct, "No" it is not correct, or "Not sure." The response with "Not sure" was counted as a wrong answer.

The degree of assimilative attitudes were measured with three statements: "I like the American way of living;" "I am proud of living in the United States of America;" and "I am ready to defend the cause this country stands on."

The degree of native attachment was measured with one statement: "I would like to spend the rest of my life in Korea if possible."

Both the degree of assimilative attitudes and the degree of native attachment were randomly mixed and presented in the same question block of the questionnaire. A five point scale, ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree, was provided for the respondents to check.

Since the hypotheses in this study are based on the assumption of linear correlation between the two variables, the Pearsonian product-moment correlation coefficient r and partial correlation are used in testing

hypotheses. The controlled variables in testing partial correlation are as follows. The length of residence was controlled for English proficiency. Both the length of residence and English proficiency were controlled for the degree of assimilative attitudes, and the degree of native attachment. The significance level was arbitrarily set at .01 or less. When the partial correlation between a pair of variables is significant, the hypothesis is considered to be supported.

Based on Lerner's (1963, p 341) "centripetal effect" hypothesis, which indicates a general pattern of overlapping audiences for the mass media, this study examines two mass media only in most cases of hypotheses testing -- one most popular print medium, newspapers, and one most popular electronic medium, television.

Results: Hypotheses Testing

1. The lower the English proficiency, the greater an immigrant's need to learn English by mass media, especially television.

Table 1 shows that there is a negative relationship between English proficiency and the need for learning English by mass media. Both zero order correlations and the partial correlations with the length of residence in America controlled for are significant. When English proficiency is low, the need to learn English by mass media is high. Here, sex difference is noted. The female respondents show a strong association with electronic media (television and radio) but not with print media

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Table 1 about here

(newspapers and magazines), whereas the male respondents show strong relationship with both print media and electronic media. That is, women immigrants use television and radio more than newspapers and magazines to learn English when their English proficiency is relatively low, while men use both print media and non-print media. Television and radio are used for learning English by both men and women, but newspapers and magazines are used only by men.

Thus, the findings lend support to Hypothesis 1.

2. As English proficiency increases, an immigrant's use of the mass media to satisfy the need for surveillance increases.

Table 2 shows that there is, in general, a weak negative association contrary to the hypothesis, between English proficiency and the need for surveillance through mass media. Only the partial correlation coefficient between English proficiency and the need for surveillance by television (with the length of residence in America controlled for) is significant at the .05 level. These findings, thus, do not support the Hypothesis 2. The findings are not strong enough to reverse the direction of the hypothesis, either.

Table 2 about here

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3. As the degree of assimilative attitudes increases, an immigrant's use of the mass media to satisfy the need for surveillance increases.

Table 2 shows that there is a significantly strong positive correlation between the degree of assimilative attitudes and the need for surveillance through mass media. Especially among the male respondents, the

correlation in the zero order and the partial correlation with the length of residence in America and English proficiency controlled for are as high as .478 through .546. Among the female respondents, they are .323 through .399.

Thus, the findings lend support to the Hypothesis 3.

4. As the degree of assimilative attitudes increases, an immigrant's use of the mass media to satisfy the need for integration increases.

A factor analysis with media need variables shows that the factor which was termed here integration needs appeared in television function only. As such, correlation analysis was done with television.

Table 3 shows that the degree of assimilative attitudes and the need for integration through television have significant positive correlations. The tendency was stronger among the female respondents than among the male respondents. Among the female respondents, both the zero order correlation and the partial correlation (with the length of residence in the U. S. and English proficiency controlled for) are significant at the .001 level (.536 and .485 respectively). Among the male respondents, both the zero order correlation and the partial correlation are significant at the .05 level (.242 and .219 respectively).

Table 3 about here

Thus, Hypothesis 4 is revised to 4', which states: As the degree of assimilative attitudes increases, an immigrant's use of television to satisfy the need for integration increases. And, the findings in general tend to support Hypothesis 4'. It is found that the hypothesis holds true, especially among the female respondents.

5. As the degree of native attachment increases, an immigrant's use of the mass media to satisfy the need for integration decreases.

By the same reason stated above in testing Hypothesis 4, the hypothesis 5 is revised to Hypothesis 5' as follows: As the degree of native attachment increases, an immigrant's use of television to satisfy the need for integration decreases.

Table 3 shows that there are negative correlations between the degree of native attachment and the need for integration through television, in general. The significance of the coefficients, however, are weak. Only the zero order correlation coefficient among the female respondents is significant at .05.

Thus, it is premature to conclude that the findings tend to support Hypothesis 5'.

6. The greater the degree of native attachment of an immigrant, the lower the need to learn English by mass media.

Table 1 shows that the degree of native attachment has no clear associations with the need for learning English by mass media. The findings do not support the Hypothesis 6.

Conclusion

The purpose of this paper was to find out how mass media functions are related to an immigrant's assimilation process. With testing of hypotheses, the following are found to be significant.

1. An immigrant's English proficiency is negatively related to his or her desire to learn English by mass media especially television. In general, both men and women among immigrants showed a strong association

with television, whereas the male respondents only showed strong relationship with newspaper.

2. The degree of assimilative attitudes is positively related to an immigrant's use of the mass media to satisfy the need for surveillance. The correlation was much stronger among the male respondents than among the female respondents.

3. The degree of assimilative attitudes is positively associated with an immigrant's use of television to satisfy the need for integration. The correlation, however, was significantly stronger among the female respondents than among the male respondents.

The findings indicate that the three functions of the mass media in a society -- surveillance, integration and socialization -- work among immigrants in satisfying immigrants' various needs. For immigrants, surveillance means obtaining information about daily life, obtaining information about social activities, getting to know how the political system works in America, and keeping up with the way government does its job. For immigrants, integration is understanding what people living in America are like, getting the feeling of involvement in important events, and knowing how the world thinks about America. For immigrants, socialization is learning English language.

There are more variables which need consideration in examining immigrants' media behavior. For instance, the length of residence in America, economic satisfaction, status satisfaction, frequency of visiting American friends, frequency of visiting compatriots, etc. Another important function of the mass media is entertainment. As such, it would be necessary to see the relationships among these variables before we draw an outline of an immigrant group's media behavior.

Despite the limitation of this study, the findings indicate that the mass media help immigrants in the neo-socialization or assimilation process. The neo-socialization function, however, has been non-purposive. The mass media have made no conscious effort to neo-socialize immigrants. If the socialization of immigrants as efficiently as possible is vital to this society, and if disruption or complete disorganization of the culture and system by new "invaders," immigrants, are to be avoided, then the time has arrived for media people to turn their attention to this socially and personally important function of the media.

TABLE 1

(A) CORRELATION COEFFICIENTS BETWEEN TWO INDEPENDENT VARIABLES AND NEED FOR LEARNING ENGLISH BY SELECTED MEDIA, AND
(B) PARTIAL CORRELATION COEFFICIENTS[a]

		Need for Learning English					
		by Newspapers			by Television		
		Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
1. English Proficiency	(A)	-.427[b]	-.193	-.337[b]	-.385[b]	-.459[b]	-.404[b]
	(B)	-.409[b]	-.185	-.306[b]	-.399[b]	-.467[b]	-.417[b]
2. Degree of Native Attachment	(A)	.034	.219	.056	.137	.064	.087
	(B)	.039	.170	.053	.1[illegible]	-.058	.058

N: 1(A): M = 58, F = 43, All = 103
1(B): M = 58, F = 42, All = 102
2(A): M = 58, F = 43, All = 103
2(B): M = 56, F = 41, All = 101

a: 1 = with the Length of Residence in U. S. controlled for.
2 = with both the Length of Residence in U. S. and English Proficiency controlled for.

b: Significant at .01.

TABLE 2

(A) CORRELATION COEFFICIENTS BETWEEN TWO INDEPENDENT VARIABLES AND NEED FOR SURVEILLANCE BY SELECTED MEDIA, AND
(B) PARTIAL CORRELATION COEFFICIENTS[a]

		Need for Surveillance					
		by Newspapers			by Television		
		Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
1. English Proficiency	(A)	-.106	-.083	-.093	-.147	-.039	-.112
	(B)	-.195	-.032	-.152	-.206	-.060	-.157
2. Degree of Assimilative Attitudes	(A)	.500[b]	.352[b]	.484[b]	.546[b]	.331[b]	.511[b]
	(B)	.478[b]	.399[b]	.469[b]	.522[b]	.323[b]	.498[b]

N: 1(A): M = 58, F = 43, All = 103 2(A): M = 58, F = 43, All = 103
1(B): M = 57, F = 42, All = 102 2(B): M = 56, F = 43, All = 101

a: 1 = with the Length of Residence controlled for.
2 = with both the Length of Residence and English Proficiency controlled for.

b: Significant at .01.

TABLE 3

(A) CORRELATION COEFFICIENTS BETWEEN TWO INDEPENDENT VARIABLES AND NEED FOR INTEGRATION THROUGH TELEVISION, AND (B) PARTIAL CORRELATION COEFFICIENTS[a]

		Need for Integration through Television		
		Male	Female	All
1. Degree of Assimilative Attitudes	(A)	.242	.536[b]	.302[b]
	(B)	.219	.485[b]	.287[b]
2. Degree of Native Attachment	(A)	-.056	-.254	-.129
	(B)	-.018	-.188	-.110

N: 1(A): M = 58, F = 43, All = 103 2(A): M = 58, F = 43, All = 104
1(B): M = 56, F = 41, All = 101 2(B): M = 56, F = 41, All = 102

a: 1 and 2 = with both the Length of Residence and English Proficiency controlled for.

b: Significant at .01.

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